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ABSTRACT
         Considerations about school music programs, often
considered to be a nonutilitarian element of school curriculum, are
examined in this paper, with a focus on the application of
technological thinking to school administration. Indepth interviews
were conducted with 30-40 administrators, teachers, counselors,
parents, and students in each of three Canadian school districts (two
in Ontario and one in British Columbia). some theorists argue that
school music contributes, in some cases, to the reproduction of an
artistically elite student population. Although this held true in two
cases, the evidence also demonstrates that another scenario may be
enacted--one in which schools contribute substantially to providing
equal educational opportunity in the arts. The findings raise
questions about assumptions commonly held to explain everyday
reality. These questions, or myths, indicate that despite the
transcendental claims of aesthetic theory about the nature of music
itself, Canadian school music education remains solidly embedded in
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AN OVERVIEW OF

ADMINISTERING SCHOOL MUS:C IN THREE CANADIAN SETTINGS:

PHILOSOPHY, ACTION, AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY

by

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ADMINISTERING SCHOOL MUSIC IN THREE CANADIAN SETTINGS:
PHILOSOPHY, ACTION, AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY

AN OVERVIEW

This multi-case study investigates the supports and barriers surrounding school music programs in three school districts of Canada. Using the words of a wide range of actors, the study shows that school music contributes, in some cases, to the reproduction of an artistically elite student population. While this constitutes the reality constructed by actors in two cases, the evidence also demonstrates that a far different scenario may be enacted -- one in which schools contribute substantially to the provision of equality of educational opportunity in the arts. The findings raise questions about assumptions commonly held as explanations of everyday reality. These questions, posed as myths, indicate that despite the transcendental claims of aesthetic theory about the nature of music itself, Canadian school music education remains solidly embedded in the ideology of its particular social, economic, and political setting.

INTRODUCTION

Official curriculum guides in Canada's ten provinces indicate similar goals and objectives for school music programs -- goals that incorporate affective responses to music with the development of cognitive skills and understanding. There appears to be a marked disparity, however, between programs within and among boards and provinces; many actual programs vary widely from statements about educational value. Although a gap between planning and implementation may be expected in any area of the curriculum, this thesis views music educational practice as particularly vulnerable to conflicting societal tensions that contribute to the uneven quality of programming.

Two main issues guide this study that investigates the supports and barriers surrounding school music programs. The first concerns the effect of technological rationality on school music programming: What is the role of an apparently non-utilitarian subject -- music in this case -- in school systems that place increasingly strong emphases on the skills and knowledge thought to directly enhance the material well-being of society's members? One aspect of this problem involves the ways in which an aesthetic subject has become part of the dominant values and attitudes of its social and political setting. This introduces questions about the utilitarian role that music has assumed within the school system. The second major issue involves the ways in which music programs, as representative of the Fine Arts, succeed or fail to provide students of various socio-economic levels equal access to educational opportunity. Here, specific queries focus upon which students take music, why they do so, and what kinds of programs are available to them.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In conducting scientific investigations, whether in natural or social science, the researcher brings to the work an orientation or set of beliefs about the nature of reality and what constitutes knowledge about phenomena. In this study, I treat schools -- and the programs designed, administered, and delivered within them -- as socially constructed. Individuals, acting singly and together, shape their environment or society. Persons within schools bring with them the shared assumptions of their society and, through their own words and actions, they maintain, modify, and change that society. These acts of maintenance and change, however, do not proceed in a simple and

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uncontested manner, but as outcomes of struggles between social groups. The resulting organizational phenomena may be seen as facilitating the wishes of certain groups and limiting that of others (Bates, 1989: 16). These groups, some of which have great power while others have comparatively little, form societal structures. Individuals are viewed, therefore, both as acting upon their society and as acted upon by societal structures or collectives. It is my assumption that an understanding of the complexities of a socially-constructed situation can be obtained most readily from the words and experiences of those directly involved.

In further developing the lens through which I view programs within each School Board, I draw upon writings in the aesthetics of music and upon curriculum, social, and administrative theory. In examining human values and meaning about music, I support through the philosophy of music -- aesthetics -- the notion that cognition and affect, as inextricably linked phenomena, both constitute meaningful aspects of school programs.[1]

The aesthetic argument may be summarized in these terms: while affect may be experienced by all persons at the elemental level, one's depth of response may[2] increase as understanding (i.e., cognition) of music develops (Collingwood, 1938: 26; Hanslick, 1958: 11, 12; Langer, 1957: 73; Sheppard, 1987: 73). The premise guiding my observation of classes and the manner in which I interpret students' words, therefore, is

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[1] My anticipation that such a perspective might not be universally shared was substantiated by the data.

[2] Reimer (1989:110) warns that increased perception merely sets the stage for a deepened aesthetic response; it makes such response possible, though in no way inevitable.

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that in the combination of feeling about music and its understanding, students are increasingly enabled to benefit from musical experiences throughout their lives. In short, my interpretation of words about music and my observation of classes were guided by indications of affective and cognitive student involvement.

From curriculum theory, at times general and, at other times, specific to school music, several issues emerge. One involves the conflict of values between those who espouse education for the personal growth of students and those who see it as preparation for the workplace (Carnoy & Levin, 1985; St. John-Brooks, 1983: 38). Another, explored here in detail, traces the dichotomies that have arisen when people apply what has been called the "objective" scientific method to an understanding of human problems. For example, perceptions of a dichotomous position between affect and cognition can have a negative impact upon the Arts when artistic ways of knowing are discounted in favour of logical and analytical approaches. According to Eisner (1982: 3) this reductionist view threatens to strip the curriculum of all but reading, writing, and computing and to present schooling solely as a preparation for the future -- that is, a future in which technological progress constitutes the major objective. Greene (1980: 20) claims, furthermore, that the subordination of affective to cognitive experiences in contemporary educational practice is at least partially attributable to the dominance of positivistic views about knowledge; it becomes continuous, therefore, with the split between fact and value that defines the utilitarian tradition.

There has been the suggestion that certain subjects of the school curriculum, not conducive to a right/wrong conclusion are academically and politically suspect (Beyer,

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1983: 106, 107; Cornbleth, 1987: 202; Marcuse, 1978: 6). For this reason, the complexity and shades of meaning inherent in the Fine Arts place these subjects in jeopardy (Swanger, 1983: 15-28).

In the 1950s, it was not surprising that music and other less secure subjects within the curriculum adopted the scientific or technological model. Arts educators, in a move to secure respectability, legitimacy, and funding, moved steadily towards a disciplined and structured approach to methodology and, later, a quantifiable means of accounting for their programs. Although planning in the 1960s and 1970s involved composers, performers, musicologists, music critics and college professors, practising music educators were conspicuously absent (Efland, 1988: 136). An outgrowth of planning that neglected the experiences of those at the "grass roots" of implementation lead to the portrayal of music as a discipline that a) could be divided into pre-packaged segments for learning and b) could be evaluated objectively. Moreover, the simplified division of learning into cognitive tasks, supplemented by records and prepared answer sheets, led to the assumption that teachers can simply teach anything, regardless of their personal knowledge base (Arendt, 1968: 12).

This has led to what some describe as a de-skilling process whereby complex jobs are broken down into specific actions with specified results so that less skilled and costly personnel can be used (Apple, 1980: 15). When this "rationalization of labour" is applied to teaching, the de-skilled teacher must be re-educated or re-skilled in appropriate methods for using the new materials. One of the costs involved in this double-forked process is the downgrading of teachers' professional work so that "[s]kills

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that teachers used to need, that were deemed essential to the craft of working with children (such as curriculum deliberation and planning, designing teaching and curriculum strategies for specific groups and individuals based on intimate knowledge of [children] are no longer as necessary. With ... pre-packaged material, planning is separated from execution (ibid.: 18). This study outlines this cost and the long-range effect of such technocratic de-skilling on students and their communities.

There are aspects of social theory as well that are applicable to my question such as the suggestion that schools, rather than providing for an equalization of given class structures, actually exacerbate the differences. Theorists point out that schools -- by sorting students at very early ages, by the expectations of teachers, and by materials used in the school -- actually *reproduce* in children the work patterns and, therefore, the economic outcomes of their given social class (see, e.g., Apple and Beyer, 1983; Anyon, 1981). Some sociologists argue that music programs are particularly elitist in that their content, in slanting towards the perceptions and habits of the middle class, is far removed from the *cultural capital* that most students bring to school (Vulliamy & Sheppard, 1984). In support of the elitist argument, we may consider also Holmes' (1985: 24) observations on the unevenness of music programming in Canadian schools. He suggests that the lack of public concern for this subject (and for physical education) may be attributed to the possibility of children becoming proficient in these areas through private study.

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RESEARCH DESIGN

In applying these issues of aesthetic, curricular and social theory to the specific questions of music programming, I conducted a descriptive and interpretive examination of three school boards; this I describe as a multi-site case study with strong overtones of critical ethnography. I base the claim to critical ethnography on my purposes for the study, which were to produce a kind of knowledge that centres on and makes topical both the actual practices and points of view of people within an organized set of social relations (Simon & Dippo, 1986: 195) and to a framework that outlines an inequitably structured society, one in which its members tend to suppress considerations and understandings of why things are the way they are and how they could be arranged otherwise (ibid.: 196). Furthermore, I follow methods of ethnographic research such as collecting data, primarily in the form of discourse, in a natural setting and of immersing myself, as much as possible, in the lived and artistic culture of the three sites.

My selection criteria were simply that the School Boards be as far removed as possible from my own experience as teacher and administrator and that they represent a variety of approaches to music programming. For practical purposes, I selected Boards where at least one consultant was known to me and could act as an immediate contact and possible key informant. Two of the Boards are located in Ontario and the third, which serves also as my pilot district, is in British Columbia. The common thread linking all three Boards is that they operate under similar Ministry recommendations concerning the provision of the Arts; in both cases, the responsibility for the delivery of

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Arts programs at elementary school levels rests primarily with the classroom or generalist teacher (Ontario, 1984; British Columbia, 1985).

The research design evolved during the study with changes involving a) methods of selecting and approaching schools and b) my primary informants who became the principals rather than consultants. A process of revision was generated, as well, between the analysis of data and my theoretical understanding of the situation. As Scott (in Burgess, 1985: 9) suggests, theory is not merely confined to the beginning or end of a research project when questions are framed and data analysis occurs. Rather, theoretical propositions constantly shape and reshape the whole of the research process and observations in the field constantly lead to a re-examination of the literature. In this interactive process between theory and practice, the literature as well as the design evolved over the study's two-year duration. This evolutionary process is not uncommon in interpretive studies where the researcher seeks an understanding of the subjective realities of others. Such studies tend to be innovative, "not necessarily capable of being spelled out in advance ... [but] requiring re-invention in every investigative setting" (Hodgkinson, 1986: 14).

At each site, I conducted lengthy interviews with 30 to 40 persons, including administrators, teachers (both music specialists and classroom), counsellors, parents, and students. These interviews followed a semi-structured format while always allowing for informants to introduce and elaborate upon their own interests and experiences. In almost all cases, interviews were audio recorded. Other forms of data were collected from curriculum documents and district reports and from community and classroom

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observations. Evidence from a *triangulation* of these sources, viewed in the light of stated theory, provided for the description and interpretation of local realities that, in turn, were corroborated and/or corrected by the interviewees.

THE FINDINGS

Although personnel within the three Boards follow similar Ministry directives at the general level, they tend to emphasize different specific statements of policy. Wide differences are found, therefore, in the planning, implementation, and administration of their music programs. Educational provisions, perceived to be the natural outcome of an inevitable administrative framework in one Board, are called into question in a second Bo   d and deemed quite unacceptable in a third. While there is evidence that Boards reflect their social setting, there emerges, as well, a clear indication that dominant organizational goals change the expectation among community members as to what constitutes music education.

Differences appear, furthermore, to be more closely associated with decision-makers' perceptions of social reality than with their aesthetic values. That is, while music instruction appears to be valued by all actors in their personal choices[3], at two sites school instruction and extra-curricular activities are perceived to be the prerogatives of "interested" and/or "talented" families. At the third site music, together with other subjects of the curriculum, receives a common emphasis for *all* children. For this reason, board

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[3] In almost all cases, but particularly where school programs are weak or non-existent, private instruction in music is provided for the children of interviewees.

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and school personnel rarely discuss concepts of parental "interest" and individual "talent"; moreover, they reject the idea of special schools for instruction in the Fine Arts.

This study also reports on specific problems of arts administration in schools, such as those surrounding staffing, semestering, and the over-crowded curriculum, and the continuous debate concerning the appropriate emphasis to place on the utilitarian pursuits of competitive festivals, musical productions, and trips as opposed to that on classroom learning. Administrators in one site, several of whom had been music teachers formerly, offer particularly informed opinions on these issues and possible solutions based on their personal experiences.

The study outlines and questions seven myths underlying school music that emerge in various guises within each Board. Myth, as I use the word, signifies a widely-held societal belief that has a more-or-less tenuous connection with pertinent evidence (Cornbleth, 1987: 187). To be sure, myths of any society are based on observed phenomena or actions; moreover, they are motivated by real and reasonable concerns and are grounded in cultural experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 185, 186). Each myth, however, has its counter-expression, its reverse side. When a myth becomes enshrined in public thought as comprehensive and all-embracing, thus obscuring its counter-expression, it begins to play a destructive role. This tendency may be traced in the myths of music education below.

The first myth, commonly found in secondary schools, is that of the relationship between musical aptitude and high academic achievement whereby the two go "hand-in-glove". Based on considerations about the cultural capital that students bring to school,

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the evidence here supports alternative explanations to the academic-musician theme. For example, students considered by their teachers and administrators to be musically "committed" were the frequent recipients of strong parental encouragement in the form of private lessons, purchased orchestral and band instruments, and the financial backing that enables costly trips to distant competitions. On the other hand, youth from "lower" academic streams, in many cases deemed to be "not interested in the [school's] music program", demonstrated both aptitude and enthusiasm for music -- especially when given musical options apart from the traditional activities of band and choir.

Closely related to the first myth is that of Talent; while the former addresses high school realities, the latter better fits the elementary situation. To examine concepts of "talent" is not to question, for a moment, the existence of inherited gifts but, rather, to suggest that we have no possible way of determining "talent" or "giftedness" when children are denied the opportunity to develop these gifts in their formative years.

Next comes the Myth of Taste which assumes that classical music appeals to upper-elite students while those from less-advantaged homes should be exposed to popular music which, after all, better represents their culture. First, the evidence here revealed very little difference in the kinds of music heard by students at home and, second, it showed strong similarities between members of these two groups in their reception of popular, classical, and jazz forms.

Another myth I question is that of the teacher as "Prima Donna". In this, the assumption flourishes that teachers are totally responsible for setting their goals, planning both curricular and extra-curricular activities, and monitoring their personal involvement

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in music programs. This may be a perfectly reasonable assumption until we examine the degree of pressure placed upon teachers to produce visible results. The teachers in this study were held accountable, not only for the achievement of individual students but, in a collective sense as well, for performing groups that were expected to "clean up" at festivals and competitions. An examination of this myth may induce administrators and teachers alike to arrive at reasonable expectations for both the classroom and the stage.

Again concerning teachers, this time in the elementary school, there is the Myth of Process whereby teachers -- regardless of their experiential background and training -- are considered to be capable of teaching anything. My data, particularly from one Board, present strong evidence that this is not so; here we see that teachers, who would bring a musical learning experience to elementary children, require a personal background in both music and pedagogical training.

The sixth myth involves the purpose of music in schools whereby the sole value is perceived to lie in enhancing the affective part of students' lives. This may be called the Myth of Fun. While this notion of affect finds empirical support both from students' comments and from class observations, the reverse side of the idea deserves attention; that is, that children are cognitively engaged as well in programs that introduce and develop facility in using the elements of music -- rhythm, melody, harmony, form, dynamics, and so on. This cognitive engagement was evident at all levels of schooling.

Perhaps the most significant myth to be questioned concerns the assumption that children enjoy equal access to musical opportunities in the school. To show that this is not necessarily the case, this study traces the route afforded some children who

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participate in early school music education and the effect of its absence in other instances. These myths, collectively, indicate that despite the transcendental claims of aesthetic theory about the nature of music itself, Canadian school music education remains solidly embedded in the ideology of its particular social, economic, and political setting.

The findings, furthermore, frequently bear out Max Weber's contention that relatively little human endeavour, whether organizationally or individually situated, leads to truly calculable results (Brubaker, 1984: 3). This study, for example, outlines the impact upon music programs of planning governed by assumptions of effectiveness and efficiency -- where decisions appear to spring from an emphasis on immediate and observable outcomes rather than from considerations about the long-term development of human knowledge, understanding, and the application of skills.

We see that educators themselves frequently set the scene for artistic success or failure. This does not necessarily occur according to policy as stated within curriculum documents but, rather, as the result of what some regard as a "natural selection" whereby the " academically gifted" (usually those of higher scoio-economic status) find themselves in the band/orchestra seats of school performance groups. In many cases, the vast majority of children, considered by their teachers to be equally "talented", receive little opportunity to work with musically trained teachers and to experience musical success and the development of their abilities.

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The study, by concentrating on a subject considered by many people to be the most non-utilitarian[4] in the school curriculum, highlights considerations about the unexamined application of technological thinking to school administration. These considerations may be extended, not only to other Fine Arts subjects, but to any area of the curriculum where policy-makers weigh the assumptions of technology against the values, attitudes and meanings held by students, teachers, and fellow-administrators.

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[4] To support this claim, I cite a recent survey conducted by the Music Educators' National Conference (*Soundpost*, 1991, vol. 7 (2)). Here findings indicate that, among two thousand adults surveyed about the relative importance of school subjects for college-bound and non college-bound students, music placed last in both categories. My study, however, would indicate that this assumption of non-utilitarianism, fanned by positivistic surveys, constitutes yet another myth of music education.

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